



NICK CARTER WEEKLY

Issued Weekly. By Subscription \$2.50 per year. Entered as Second Class Matter at New York Post Office by STREET & SMITH, 238 William St., N. Y.

No. 286.

Price, Five Cents.

NICK CARTER'S PULLMAN PLOT

OR
FOLLOWING A CHANCE CLEW



BY

THE AUTHOR OF
"NICK CARTER"

THE MILITIA FIRED ON THE MOB, AND THE WOMAN TOTTERED AND FELL JUST AS CHICK OVERTOOK HER.



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NICK CARTER'S PULLMAN PLOT;

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Following a Chance Clew.

By the author of "NICHOLAS CARTER."

CHAPTER I.

BLACK BART GETS A MESSAGE.

Chance will never throw good fortune in a man's way unless he is always on the alert to take advantage of it.

Nothing ever happens within sight of Nick Carter which he does not see. Thus, by constantly having his eyes open and his wits about him, the great American detective has struck the trail of some of the most important cases of the many scores which he has worked out during the last few years.

It was in this manner that Nick struck the trail of a piece of rascality which he numbers among the most important pieces of work which he has done in years.

The time was about the beginning of a great railroad strike at Chicago.

He and his assistant, Chick, well disguised, were walking down Broadway about three o'clock one afternoon, when Nick nudged the younger man, and, in a subdued voice, said:

"See that man in the brown derby and plaid trousers, half a block ahead of us, Chick?"

"I'm onto him, Nick. What about him?"

"I saw his face a few moments ago and wouldn't have recognized it, for he has grown a beard, or wears a false one. But his habit of turning in the toes of his right foot when he walks, and of sticking out the little finger of his right hand as he swings his arm gives him away."

"Thunder, Nick! you don't mean to say it's Black Bart?"

"Well, notice the peculiarities I mentioned."

"You're right. It's Black Bart as I live!" ex-

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claimed Chick, after watching the man before him for a while. "He hasn't been out of Sing Sing very long."

"I had no idea his time was up, but that is Black Bart, and this is not Sing Sing," was Nick's logical conclusion.

"He doesn't seem anxious to keep out of sight," mused Chick.

"That's because he knows there's nothing against him at present for which the police can lay hands on him. But I'll bet my watch against a jackknife that the fellow is even now working his wits to get into another rich job. It is as impossible for Black Bart to keep straight as it is for water to run up hill."

"There he goes into the telegraph office," interrupted Chick, as the man under discussion turned down Fifth avenue and crossed over to the Western Union office on Twenty-third street.

"That means something, my boy. I told you Black Bart wouldn't be promenading Broadway for his health. I'm going to follow up this lead a little. You wait outside and follow him when he leaves the office, if I signal to you to do it. I'm going over to see what business he has in the office of the Western Union."

Leaving Chick at the hotel corner of the avenue and Twenty-third street, Nick crossed to the Western Union office and entered.

Black Bart, a "crook" known to the New York police as one of the boldest and smartest of his class, was in the act of signing a receipt for a message for which he had called, and which he had evidently expected to be sent there for him.

As Nick entered Bart shot a swift glance at him.

But whatever suspicions he may have had on the spur of the moment were allayed when he saw the countrified-looking man go to one of the desks and busy himself writing a message.

Nick seemed to have trouble with his pen, and he shook it very often and with considerable energy, as if the ink refused to flow.

As a matter of fact, he was signaling to Chick, and this is what he said to his assistant across the street:

"He has received a telegram. Follow him. Get the telegram if you can and join me at the house as soon as possible."

Bart took his telegram, and, watching Nick under the shadow of his heavy black eyelashes, he walked slowly to the street, and turned down toward Sixth avenue.

He had gone but a few yards when he suddenly retraced his steps and strode rapidly back.

When he came within sight of the telegraph office interior the country-looking individual was standing at the receiving window with his back to the street.

A clerk had just received his message, and was reading it over aloud to insure no mistake.

This is what Bart heard the clerk read:

To MARY JANE BROWN, Belleyview, New York:—Will not be home till to-morrow evening.
JOHN BROWN.

Nick paid for the message, and, while he was doing so, Bart once more walked down the street toward Sixth avenue.

Again he stopped. This time the crook stepped behind a street showcase and looked up toward Fifth avenue.

He saw the alleged John Brown come out of the telegraph office, shuffle across toward the Fifth Avenue Hotel, and disappear up Broadway without turning his head.

"One can't be too particular at this especial time," muttered Bart, as he finally started down the avenue. "Them dog-dasted detectives hound a man like tar-nation."

He little dreamed that one of the "dog-dasted detectives" was even then shadowing him from the other side of the street.

At Sixth avenue he ascended to the uptown station of the elevated road.

A Harlem train had just pulled out, and the station platform was almost deserted.

Bart walked to the south end, and, assuring himself that he was alone, he took his message from an

inside pocket, pulled off the envelope, and read the contents.

Then he tore the telegram into small bits and dropped them into one of those tin dust cans which are seen on all the elevated railroad stations.

The train had scarcely left the station when Chick came out on the platform and walked back to the dust can.

It was nearly filled with odds and ends of station refuse.

On the top lay Bart's message in fragments, but well bunched together.

Chick soon had all of the pieces of the telegram in his pocket in time to take the next train, which he left at Thirty-third street.

Fifteen minutes later he and Nick were together in the study of Nick's house, and the torn message was correctly fitted together on the detective's desk.

This is what the two men read:

It is all for the right. You should have never been seen, or let the old man boss you around, and therefore when he and Tom agrees I'm to take a trip North to the shore of the limited little lake to-day. If possible, Don and Lizzie will make it be a tryst on the upper board walk with Louise Berry.

Both men finished it about the same time, and they looked at each other simultaneously.

A common smile illuminated their faces.

"Funny how those crooks cling to commonplace threadbare cipher messages, isn't it?" remarked Chick.

"Yes, and this third-word cipher is the most ancient of all," agreed Nick. "Let us see just how it reads:

All right. Have seen the boss and he agrees. Take North Shore Limited to-day. Don will be on board. LOUISE.

"It came from Chicago. There's a big game on hand, Chick, and Bart has been summoned."

"That's evident. And he's to start for Chicago to-day."

"Humph! well, I'll be a fellow-passenger with Black Bart on the North Shore Limited. Let's see, that leaves at four-thirty. I'll just have time to

make it. Bart will have other company besides Don."

"Who is this Don, Nick?"

"I haven't the least idea."

"And Louise, who sent the message?"

"Don't you know?"

"Lady Louise?"

"None other; the most daring and most successful shoplifter in America."

"So she's been in Chicago ever since she disappeared from New York?"

"Looks like it. If we can land her with Black Bart, Giffins will have to pay that reward they offered when she walked away with all those diamonds."

"She's Black Bart's wife, is she not, Nick?"

"In common law, I guess she is. But I must get into another disguise and make for the depot, if I don't want to get left."

"And I?"

"You and Patsy must follow me by the first train out on the other road. Bring trunk 'H' with you. That contains enough disguises for us all. Meet me at the Palmer House."

Half an hour later Nick was on his way to the depot. He had just time to buy a ticket and secure a berth on the North Shore Limited.

When the train pulled out, Nick and Bart were fellow-passengers.

The detective had some curiosity to find out who "Don" was, and what he was like.

"I ought to have easy sailing on the way to Chicago," mused Nick, as he settled himself in his seat. "Since Bart doesn't suspect my presence on the train, my disguise should be sufficient to conceal my identity, though I have used it before. I'll keep my man and his 'Don' under my eye as we go along."

Had the detective known that his identity was not so much a mystery to Black Bart as he supposed, there would have been much less trouble for him in store a little later on.

CHAPTER II.

THE WRECK OF THE NORTH SHORE LIMITED.

If Don was aboard the train Nick was not able to identify him during the first afternoon and evening of the journey.

Black Bart not only held himself aloof from all his fellow-passengers, but it was evident to Nick that the noted crook was making no effort to find Don.

Of course, the detective had no knowledge whether or not Bart and Don had ever met before.

However, they were members of the same gang, and, even though neither had ever seen the other, they had secret signs whereby they could easily make themselves known to each other.

Bart retired early, and Nick satisfied himself that the ex-convict was in for as comfortable a night of it as possible before he also turned in and went to sleep.

Early next morning what Nick patiently waited for occurred.

He had followed Bart into the smoking apartment after breakfast. Besides themselves there were several other passengers present, all enjoying the solace of a cigar.

Presently another passenger entered.

He was a young man with an old face. His features were thin, complexion sallow, eyes steel gray and small, hands large and bony, and he walked with a small stoop to his shoulders.

Glancing carelessly around, this young man singled out Black Bart, and, addressing him, said:

"Would you oblige me with a light?"

The latter quickly handed his cigar to the stranger, who used it to light his own.

It was a somewhat remarkable fact, inasmuch as a box of matches hung within reach of the young man's hand.

When Black Bart's cigar was returned their hands came in contact.

All these things met the quick eye of Nick Carter. "Black Bart and Don have got together at last,"

said Nick to himself, as he watched the byplay of the cigars.

The stranger sat down, and for some time devoted himself to his cigar.

At last he addressed some random remark to Black Bart, who replied casually.

This led to an ordinary conversation, in which the two men seemed to be forming one of those chance acquaintances common to palace-car travelers.

Black Bart was the first to leave the smoking-room.

Later in the forenoon the two men got together in a forward section of the car with their faces toward the seat where Nick sat. They soon became engaged in a low-toned conversation, which none but themselves could hear on account of the peculiar situation of their position relative to the other passengers.

Nick would have given a great deal to have been in a position to hear what the two scoundrels were saying to each other, but he dared not even disclose the fact that he was watching them, let alone try to get near enough to understand their words.

The train, late in the afternoon, approached Chicago, and on all sides could be seen evidences of the mighty strike, in which capital and labor had just begun to contend.

The passengers for the most part were gazing anxiously out of the car windows, noting every sign of the great strike.

Still, the train thundered on at the rate of forty miles an hour, seemingly regardless of the danger through which it sped.

At this interesting time Black Bart arose and passed back to the smoking-room.

Nick followed him.

The two were alone in the compartment.

No one else was in sight.

Nick saw Bart eye him intently as he entered.

Without seeming to notice the latter's close inspection, Nick said, in a casual way:

"Well, we are almost at our journey's end."

"I don't know about that, sir, when you include me," smiled the villain, "but you speak truly, so far as you yourself are concerned, Nick Carter. You are at your journey's end in this world at least."

These startling words had scarcely time to impress themselves on the detective's mind, when he happened to glance in a mirror a little to the left of where Bart stood, coolly toying a cigarette.

What he saw explained Bart's bravado and seeming unconcern.

Don had followed Nick into the smoking-room. He was even then standing at Nick's back with a cocked pistol not two inches from the base of the detective's brain, aimed under the right ear.

Not a soul but the three men was within sight, and the noise of the thundering train was enough to drown the report of a pistol shot.

Don evidently waited for a word from Black Bart, who could not resist the temptation to add a few sentiments before the "execution" took place.

"I was sure you'd be aboard, but it took us some time to find you out. Now you're going to commit suicide. That's what we'll tell the passengers when you are gone.

"As we two will be the only eye witnesses and shall turn up missing when the coroner wants us, there will be nothing to explain who you are and why you did it. Are you ready, Don?"

"All ready, cap."

"Then let her go, and—"

There was an entirely unexpected upset to their plans.

An awful crash followed.

Nick's almost last impression before a blank came over his mind was that Don had pulled the trigger; but like a flash there followed a conviction of what had happened.

The train was off the track.

The special sleeper in which they were traveling had left the track and was going thundering down the embankment a distance of forty feet.

Then all was a blank.

The next thing Nick knew he was lying on the ground and some one was wiping blood from his head.

A man's voice said:

"He's all right. A mere scalp wound and a bad stun—that's all. No bones broken, I guess, and he'll come around all right. So we'd better attend to those who need more care."

"You are right," was the reply, spoken at a short distance away. "Here is a poor fellow who is beyond help, I guess. See! his head is under the car and is mashed to a jelly."

"Heavens!" cried the first speaker. "What a sight! The poor fellow didn't know what hurt him, and his closest friend could identify him only by his clothes."

"Yes, he's beyond help. Let's go forward. There are some penned in in the front part of the coach."

As soon as they left, Nick raised his head and looked around.

The body of the mutilated man under the car was within reach of his hand.

In a moment he recognized it as the form of Don. Another hasty glance assured him that Black Bart was nowhere near.

With a haste peculiar to himself, Nick Carter "went through" Don's pockets like lightning and transferred the contents to his own clothes.

There wasn't much to take, and he had no time to see of what it consisted.

Rising to his feet, he found he was quite himself and able to lend a hand. He hurried forward where the wreck was more complete and assisted in extricating the unfortunate victims.

A large number were injured, some seriously.

Only three had been killed. The engineer jumped, but the fireman was crushed under the upturned engine.

Another victim was a man whose head was literally ground into bits, which rendered identification by features impossible.

By the clothes, however, he was recognized as a

passenger from New York, who for some time before the accident had been seen in conversation with a dark-bearded, heavy-set man—also a New York passenger.

Strange to say, the latter individual completely disappeared after the accident.

Not a trace of him could be found, and he alone might be able to furnish some identity to the man with the crushed head.

There was nothing found in the dead man's clothes to tell who he was or where he had lived.

So the body was taken to Chicago and placed in the morgue for identification.

The only two men who saw him alive that day, and could have given some information about his name, did not go near the body, however, and two days later the remains of Don were laid away in potter's field in a nameless grave.

It was late that evening before Nick got into Chicago proper.

The evening editions of the afternoon papers already contained an account of the accident to the North Shore Limited.

At first it was believed to be the work of strikers, but that theory was quickly exploded when later a broken rail showed the cause of the accident.

A number of the strikers who happened to be in the vicinity of the wreck had worked nobly aiding in the rescue of the imprisoned passengers.

But, as is usual in such cases, a thief or thieves had got in their work.

A number of valises were missing when a little order came out of the confusion, and several gentlemen realized that their diamond studs and watches were gone.

A black-bearded, rather forbidding-looking passenger in the last sleeper turned up missing, and the theory was that he was one of the crooks who had got away with the stolen property.

As Nick read the last bit of "news" he smiled.

"They've got that much of it down right at least," he mused.

"Black Bart was after my valise, and I guess he got it. Wonder what he'll say when he opens it and finds it stuffed with old paper and rags. Nick Carter carrying a tell-tale carpet bag, eh? Well, I guess not!"

When he presented himself at the desk of the Palmer House he was not exactly such a neatly-dressed, cleanly person as the clerks of that hotel are in the habit of receiving as guests; for Nick had not come out of the wreck as a hat comes out of a bandbox.

"I'd like a good, comfortable outside room with a private bath," he said to the stately clerk.

"Oh, would you now?" was the sneering reply. "You look as if you needed a bath, to say nothing of a suite of rooms. How would the bridal chamber suit you?"

"First-class, only I haven't brought my bride with me this trip."

"I'm sorry for her now, really. How she can let you leave her, even for an hour, I can't imagine."

"Well, do I get the room?" asked Nick, meekly, as the lordly clerk twisted his eighteen-carat diamond shirt stud and looked absent-mindedly down the rotunda.

The question caused his eyes to once more fall upon the disheveled detective, and a scowl actually disarranged the clerk's handsome features.

"Say, look a-here, young fellow," he growled. "This is a hotel, not a station-house or a ten-cent lodging room. Just walk out on State street, and a policeman will direct you to the nearest place where you can get free accommodation at the city's expense."

Nick looked as if he was considerably cast down at this treatment.

Meanwhile a number of guests had gathered around and laughed at the smart clerk's retorts. One or two of them also began to guy Nick, but he paid no attention to them.

Finally, turning once more to the clerk, he said: "Before I go I'd like to leave something with you

to be put in your safe till to-morrow. I don't like to risk it among the other lodgers at the station-house."

"Good heavens! hear the man!" exclaimed the clerk, with a laugh. "What is it you have that is so valuable? a briar pipe or a patent growler?"

For answer, Nick thrust a hand into an inside pocket of his vest and pulled out his handsome time-watch which cost five hundred dollars. Another dip produced a diamond stud worth several thousand dollars, which fairly dazzled the astounded clerk's eyes. A third reach into those mysterious depths brought forth a roll of five-hundred-dollar bills, "as large as a man's leg," to use a street phrase.

All these Nick laid on the desk before the dazed official and the now staring men at his back.

"It would hardly be safe to sleep in a station-house with those things in my possession, and if you will kindly put them in——"

"Great Cæsar!" gasped the clerk, "who are you?"

"What you are not—a gentleman——"

"Sir!" flashed the official.

"A gentleman," finished Nick, "who has just been in a railroad accident. But I see Mr. Potter over there. He knows me, and if you can't accommodate me, he will be only too glad——"

"S-h-h!" whispered the clerk, turning pale as he, following Nick's eyes, saw the proprietor crossing the rotunda. "Do not mention this to Mr. Potter, I beg, and you'll not regret it while I control the best the hotel affords."

"All right," said Nick, gathering up his valuables. "Then see how soon you can accommodate me with what I want."

"Please register," fawned the clerk.

"I never register," curtly replied Nick.

"Name, then, please?"

"Call me what you like—John Jacob Astor, Cornelius Vanderbilt, Claus Spreckels, or John D. Rockefeller. I lost my name in the wreck."

A few dry laughs at Nick's back caused the clerk to color furiously.

"Meet me at the bar in ten minutes, gentlemen," the latter said, addressing the crowd. "They're on me this time."

And while the clerk was "setting 'em up" to his friends, and speculating with them who the strange guest was, Nick was taking a bath and getting ready for dinner in the best suite of rooms which the great Chicago hotel contained.

As he dressed, he said to himself:

"This fellow Bart seems to be lost in the wilderness of this great city temporarily, and it's going to be hard work to find him again. If Chick and Patsy were only here it would help me wonder—— Hello!"

He was interrupted by the door of his room suddenly opening without the ceremony of a preliminary knock.

"Speak of the devil and he appears," laughed Nick.

The man who thus intruded without first asking leave was Chick himself.

CHAPTER III.

NICK HUNTING FOR A TRAIL IN CHICAGO.

On the morning following Nick's arrival in Chicago he called at the office of Chief Shea, of the detective bureau, and requested an interview with that official.

He was ushered into the chief's private office, and there confronted by a large, pompous-looking individual who wore his hair pompadour, had a fierce-looking waxed mustache, and wore the air of one in authority who realized his self-importance.

"Well, sah!" was this individual's greeting almost before the door had closed behind Nick.

The latter was well acquainted with Chief Shea, and at a glance knew he was not in the presence of that gentleman.

"I want to see Chief Shea," he said, not wishing to waste time with a subaltern.

"Oh, do you? Well, Chief Shea is not here, and won't be to-day. What is your business with him?"

"Probably you will permit me to state it to him

"myself," was Nick's cool reply, ready to fire back, but on second thought, he said:

"I'm a New York detective and——"

"You look like one," was the insolent interruption.

"I want one of your best men, who knows your crooks and their haunts, to help me find a criminal whom I followed here from New York and have temporarily lost."

"Is that all? Now look here, young fellow; you'd better go back to New York and cut your eye-teeth. You evidently think you've struck a peanut town, but I want you to understand that we are a city of 1,600,000 people. Just stop and think of that if you are capable of doing it."

"Well, sir, I don't care if you are a city of sixty-five million people. I've come here after my man and one or two of yours, and I'm going to get them with or without your help."

"Well, I admire your nerve," gasped the pompous official. "Our men have their hands pretty full just now on account of the confounded strike. But they know Chicago from Englewood to Prairie avenue, and if you'll call around this evening I'll see if I can spare a man to put you on your game."

"Thanks, awfully," replied Nick, mockingly, nettled at the subaltern's patronizing manner. He turned toward the door, when the latter interrupted him by saying:

"Hold on! Be kind enough to leave your name, young man, and where you are staying."

"Why, certainly," replied Nick, with his hand on the knob of the door. "My name is Tom Collins, and I'm stopping with Phil Armour. Good-morning."

Before the stupefied flunkie could recover from his surprise Nick was outside with the door slammed in the face of the man of importance.

Only for a second did the chief *pro tem.* sit and look at the spot where the New York detective had stood a few moments before. Then muttering an oath, he rushed into the outer office and issued a

hasty order to one of his detectives sitting there waiting for something to turn up.

"Did you see that man who just went out?" he panted.

"I did," answered the detective.

"After him, then, and find out where he stops; find out all about him and report to me at once. Blast his insolence! I'll spoil his game if it takes every man on the force."

The detective shot out on the street as if propelled by a spring. But short as had been the time since Nick's departure, not a trace of him could be found in another direction.

As the Chicago Vidocq was pushing his way down the street at a rapid pace, hoping to overtake his man, he was accosted by an old man with a long, white beard, who asked him the time of day.

With an oath, the detective shoved the old man aside and rushed on, his eyes searching eagerly through the crowd ahead.

The white-bearded man watched him with a chuckle, and mumbled to himself:

"Chief Shea would never have given an order like that, but I expected it from a fresh beginner. Now I'll go back and have a talk with Chick about this case."

"If we can manage it alone, all the better. But where to pick up our lost chord is a puzzle. Ah! I have an idea. I'll see what Chick thinks of it."

And while the Chicago sleuth was reporting failure to his enraged superior, Nick was recounting the result of his visit to Chief Shea's office.

"Now," said he, in conclusion, "I'd rather fail in this case entirely than to accept a particle of aid from the local bureau."

"But you'll not fail, Nick," supplemented Chick, earnestly. "I know you too well to let you even state that possibility."

"Well, I rather think we'll pull through all right. Chicago is a pretty large place, and we're not quite as much at home here as we are in New York, but we have been over it a few times, and it's got to be

a good deal bigger to hide Black Bart and Lady Louise from us, eh, my boy?"

"That's the way I'm thinking," nodded Chick. "But how will we start in on the work now?"

"I'll tell you. Among the insignificant things I took from Don's pockets was a visiting card with two names and two addresses on it."

"I remember. What were they? Let's look at the card again."

Nick produced a man's visiting card, on which was printed in script the simple name:

FERNANDO YAGAMEZ.

In pencil under the name was the address:

Room 72, Imperial Hotel.

On the reverse side, also written in pencil, were the words:

BARCLAY ALLEN.

No. — Wall Street.

The card was badly worn and much soiled by constant handling, and the Wall street number was wholly effaced, whether accidentally or purposely Nick couldn't decide.

"I'm going to have these addresses examined into at the other end," said Nick, as he sat down and wrote a long message to Superintendent Byrnes.

"Send that off as soon as you can," he said, handing the message to Chick when he finished it, at the same time handing the latter his Western Union frank or deadhead credentials. "We ought to get an answer this afternoon, and then we may have a clew."

Chick took the message to the office and dispatched it.

About five o'clock the answer came back as follows:

No man answering to the name ever occupied room 72 at the Imperial Hotel nor any other room in the hotel.

Barclay Allen is a young stock broker. Parents live on Michigan avenue, Chicago. Left here three days ago for that city. Is still there. Man answering the description you give called at Allen's office morning of the day you left. Seemed much put out to learn young Allen had gone to Chicago. BYRNES.

think, but have probably been barking up the wrong tree in the Imperial Hotel business," commented Nick, after he had read Superintendent Byrnes' telegram. "Wait a moment."

He rang the bell, and presently a boy answered.

"Is there a hotel in Chicago called the Imperial, boy?" asked Nick.

"I should say so. It's a new one over on the West side. Quite a swell affair, too, but not very big. Mostly patronized by clubmen and brokers."

Nick gave the intelligent lad a quarter and dismissed him. Turning to Chick, he said:

"Let it be your immediate duty to go to the Imperial Hotel and learn all you can about Fernando Yagamez."

"All right. And you?"

"I'm going to make a call on the Allens of Michigan avenue," was Nick's response.

An hour later Nick Carter, in full dress, drove up to a palatial residence on Chicago's fashionable avenue and ascended the steps with the freedom of a frequent guest.

His ring was answered by a liveried servant.

"Is Mr. Barclay Allen at home?" he inquired.

"Be pleased to step in, sir, and I'll see," was the response.

Nick was ushered into a handsome reception-room.

"What name, sir?" asked the servant, when no card was forthcoming.

"Tell Mr. Allen one of his New York friends wishes to see him on a matter of importance."

The servant departed. Very shortly a handsome, pale-faced, athletic-looking young man, about thirty years old, entered the room and looked eagerly at Nick.

"I beg pardon," he said. "There must be some mistake. The servant said a New York friend wished to——"

"There is no mistake. I sent the message, Mr. Allen."

"But you are——"

"Well, here's something. We've struck a lead, I

"I am a friend to all whom I can serve. Let me make myself and my business known. I am Nick Carter, and—"

"What—the famous detective?" cried Allen, interrupting.

"Nick Carter, the detective. I am on the track of a noted criminal whom I followed to this city, but have lost. My only clew is a card on which was written your New York address. I have reasons to know that my man's pal carried this card and called at your office shortly after you left for Chicago.

"I further know that he must have gone to New York purposely to see you, and finding you had come to Chicago, he followed you here."

"Good heavens! What was his name?"

"The only name I knew him to have was Don."

"Where is he now?"

"In the morgue. He was killed on the way here in the railroad accident."

"Then what can I do about it?"

"I thought it was barely possible you might aid me in identifying him, and thereby lead me onto the track of his pal, whom I have lost."

"I know nothing of him."

"Nor have an idea of why he went to New York to see you?"

Allen hesitated some moments before he replied. Then he said:

"Pardon me if I consult my father before I answer that question."

Nick bowed, and young Allen went out.

He was gone ten minutes. When he returned, a stately-looking, elderly gentleman, with white hair and a refined face, accompanied him.

He introduced the older man to Nick as his father—Lester Allen.

"Some good fortune, I believe, has directed you to us, Mr. Carter," said Barclay Allen, after the introduction. "We are plunged into a family matter of deep concern, which we have not the courage to put into the hands of the local police because that

would bring about exactly what we wish to avoid—publicity and consequent scandal.

"Now that you are here, you may help us. I know Nick Carter and the reputation he has won by fidelity and honesty. Will you help us, as we trust you above all others of your profession?"

"Help you? How?"

"You asked me a while ago whether I had any idea what could have been the mission to New York of the man who was killed in the accident. I fear I know, or could guess."

"Well?"

"My sister has been mysteriously missing for a week. We are about convinced that she is detained against her will, or has met with foul play."

"I believe the man you speak of went to New York to see me about her for some purpose which we cannot now discover."

"Do I understand that when she first disappeared you did not believe harm had come to her?"

"Yes. In fact, we believed it was an elopement."

"Why?"

"Because father received a letter from her to that effect."

"The letter was forged?"

"No! I'll swear it is genuine. An expert forger could not follow her peculiar style of penmanship so perfectly."

"Then why have you changed your minds?"

"Because the man she professed to have eloped with has proven an alibi, and we know Alice is incapable of lying."

"Does she mention this man's name in her letter?"

"No. But we know she loves him madly and would elope with no other. We do not now believe she would marry even him clandestinely."

"Who is he?"

"His name is Vernon—Guy Vernon, a druggist of State street. He is also captain of a local militia company and is now on duty with his company acting against the strike."

"Had she no other lover?"

"She had no other lover, but several suitors."

"Any whom your father here favored?"

"None in particular. There was one, however, who was very persistent and annoying."

"Who was he?"

"A Spaniard who lives at the Imperial Hotel. His name is Fernando Yagamez. I don't like him and half suspect he is at the bottom of the whole affair."

Nick made no verbal answer, but felt a thrill of pleasure as he said to himself:

"And I'll swear to it. At last I'm on the track of Black Bart and Lady Louise. They are both as good as landed in the Tombs already."

CHAPTER IV.

THE MYSTERIOUS SPANIARD.

Without betraying his new-found interest in the disappearance of the daughter and sister, Nick Carter proceeded to get further information in the case before him, feeling confident that it would in some way become part and parcel of the hunt for Black Bart and the latter's mission in Chicago.

"This Spaniard, whom you say was annoying," inquired Nick, "do I understand he was favored in his suit by you?" addressing the elder Allen.

"By no means," came the quick reply. "I had some business relations with him, and he has in that way been several times in this house. Once I invited him to stay to dinner, when he met Alice. After that he called several times to see her in spite of the fact that she refused to receive him after his first call."

"Why did she refuse to receive him after his first call?"

"Because she discovered that he was very much smitten and was calling in the guise of a lover."

"And after that?"

"He frequently annoyed her with letters through the mail and by messenger."

"Did she answer any of them?"

"One, and one only. That was to inform him

that she did not and could not love him, and to request him to cease annoying her."

"And he wrote again after that?"

"He replied to her letter, reiterating his undying love, and closed by declaring that sooner or later he was positive she would be his wife. The last words of this letter were very peculiar. They did not occur to me or her to have any special significance at the time, but since Alice disappeared they have outlined themselves upon my mind."

"What were they?"

"The letter closed thus: 'However you may struggle against fate at this time, I know that you were made for me, and in due season I shall possess you. I have never in my life failed to obtain the desires of my soul, and shall not in this instance. Kismet: It is fate.'"

"You spoke of Yagamez doing business for you. What is your business, may I ask?"

"I am in the silks, satins, and velvet importing business. But the business which he conducted for me was a small deal in stocks through him as a broker."

"Did he go to you or you to him?"

"He approached me about it."

"How did it turn out?"

"Not profitable."

"Humph! Have you seen him since your daughter disappeared?"

"No. I intended to hunt him up to-morrow."

"Then do not do it. Let him alone for the present. If you have no objection, I should like to see the letter your daughter left behind when she disappeared—or the letter purporting to be hers."

"She didn't leave it behind. It was mailed."

"Where?"

"In the general post office. At least, it bears the general office postmark. I'll get it for you."

The elder Allen left the reception-room for a few minutes. When he returned he had a sheet of note-paper in his hand. This he handed to Nick.

It was, as the younger Allen had declared, written in a very peculiar hand—one very hard to imitate.

The note was brief and pointed, as follows:

DEAREST PAPA:—Don't worry about me. I'm going away to get married, but will return in a few weeks. Till then, good-by.
ALICE.

"You are sure it is not an elopement with the favored lover—this Captain Vernon?"

"As sure as I live. She promised me that she would never marry him without my consent, dearly as she loved him. Knowing her as only a father can know the character of his child, I felt assured that she would rather die than break her word, and therefore permitted her to see Captain Vernon in this house once a week."

"You have little to do with the police, I suppose, Mr. Allen?"

"I never had occasion to call upon them till a few weeks ago, when my house was burglarized and robbed of valuable jewelry and silver plate."

"Did the police recover the goods or find the thieves?"

"No. Nothing has been discovered of either so far. A man's troubles all come together, I suppose. In addition to the robbery of my residence and my daughter's strange disappearance, I have three car-loads of the most valuable silks and satins on the way from New York. And here is this railroad tie-up. The Lord only knows where those silks are, or what will become of them."

"What are they worth?"

"There are at least fifty thousand dollars' worth in each car."

Nick soon after took his leave of the Allens, assuring the father and son that they should have news of the missing daughter and sister in a few days.

It was late when he reached his room at the Palmer House, where he expected to find Chick waiting for him, and he was not disappointed.

One look into his assistant's face was enough to tell him that Chick had not spent his evening unsuccessfully.

"I found my man," said the latter, not waiting to be catechised.

"He pretends to be a stockbroker," put in Nick, somewhat to Chick's surprise.

"Pretends to be? How did you find that out?"

"First tell me how you got your information."

"I was in dead luck, Nick, in more ways than one. Scarcely had I entered the Imperial's office when I heard one lounger say to another:

"There goes Yagamez. That Spaniard is a sort of mystery to me."

"Why?" asked his companion.

"Because he loses more money than he makes on the stock exchange, yet always seems to have plenty to draw from."

"Maybe he gambles in the ordinary way," suggested the other.

"I hardly think so," was the response, "for you know I do considerable of that myself, and I've never run across him at any of the games. Yagamez is a queer duck. He has few social acquaintances and doesn't care to make any. But I've noticed he has callers every now and then who are not well known in the business world."

"Sort of mysterious people, eh?"

"Well, at least, persons who are not well known, and some who are socially and intellectually below him."

"Did you ever ask Darcey, the clerk, about him?"

"Precious little information you'll get from Darcey. Yagamez lives well, pays bills promptly, and is therefore all O. K. with the hotel people. I'll warrant no man has ever lived in the Imperial three years about whose affairs so little has become known as that Spaniard."

"At this point the two men who were discussing the Spaniard moved away, and I did not follow because I had spotted my man, and didn't want to lose sight of him. It was well I didn't, either," chuckled Chick, suggestively. "While I kept my eye on him, a bell-boy came up to him and said something. Yagamez at once went to the elevator and ascended."

"Then I sought out the bell-boy who had given him the message and inquired:

"Wasn't that Senor Yagamez who just went into the elevator?"

"He said it was."

"Has he gone to his room?"

"No, sir," replied the boy; "he's gone to the parlor to see a lady."

"With this pointer I managed soon after to get a peep into the parlor.

Yagamez and the woman were seated in one corner conversing in low tones.

Their position had evidently been chosen because it was entirely safe from possible eavesdroppers.

The woman was deeply veiled.

I determined to leave Yagamez and follow the woman.

Therefore, when she left the hotel, Patsy and I followed her—"

"Oh, you took Patsy with you," interrupted Nick.

"Yes. We followed her, but, of course, not together.

We chased her out to a house on West Jackson street, which she entered with the aid of a latchkey.

It was somewhat troublesome for her to find the keyhole, and she raised her veil so she could see better. Then I caught a glimpse of her face, and, Nick, you can't guess who she was."

"Can't I? Why, I shouldn't be surprised if she were our Lady Louise, the queen of the shoplifters."

"Well, by thunder! how did you guess it?"

Through the information I got on Michigan avenue this evening concerning the Spaniard. Is she still in that house on West Jackson street?"

"No. I saw her leave the house half an hour later. Then I came back here."

"And left Patsy to follow the trail?"

"Yes, if he can."

"What do you mean by that?"

"Well, when she left the West Jackson street house she went away in a covered wagon—such as is used by market men and gardeners. An old man with Greeley whiskers drove the wagon up to the front door from the stable, in the rear, evidently,

and almost immediately Lady Louise came out and got in with him.

"And, Nick, if we hadn't seen her go in and been on the lookout for strange things, neither I nor Patsy would ever have recognized her."

"Disguised, eh?"

"You bet. The demurest-looking farm girl any one ever clapped eyes on. Would easily have passed for a farmer's daughter. She must have made a lightning change in her clothes."

"When the wagon drove away Patsy followed it?" asked Nick.

"No, he didn't. When the wagon drove away Patsy went with it."

"Inside?"

"Yep. The boy made a bold break and crawled in behind as the old man whipped up his horses. I saw him disappear through the curtains or canvas, and then the wagon turned a corner and was out of sight."

"Patsy was rather reckless, wasn't he?"

"It was his only chance to find out where the rig went and not be discovered himself."

"Well," said Nick, "all we can do now is to wait till Patsy comes back. Then, from the information which he will give us, we ought to be able to bag the whole gang and turn up their game. At the same time I shall not be surprised if Lester Allen's daughter be restored to her family."

But Patsy did not return all that night, nor yet the next day. When another evening came and Nick's youngest assistant had not put in an appearance, the great detective gave words to his fears.

"Chick," said he, "Black Bart and Lady Louise have captured Patsy. We've got to move, and quickly, too."

CHAPTER V.

PATSY IN THE HANDS OF THE ENEMY.

Nick Carter's conclusions about Patsy were correct.

The detective had jumped right into the lion's jaws.

It was a venturesome thing for him to leap into the farm wagon from the rear as it drove away from the house on West Jackson street.

He realized that he ran a big risk of being discovered, but it was the only way in which he could accomplish what he had set out to do—discover the destination of the disguised Lady Louise and her innocent-looking old farmer escort.

But discovery and a "bounce" from the wagon was all that entered his head as being probable.

Danger—personal violence—never suggested itself until he was overwhelmed with the surprise of it.

The rear of the wagon was dark as the inside of a jug after the curtains through which he forced his way dropped after him.

He could see the outlines of the form of the old farmer and his companion against the light of the open front.

The rear part of the wagon bed was covered with hay, or straw, underneath which were articles of firmer texture.

Anxious to overhear any conversation which might be going on between the farmer and the girl, Patsy cautiously crawled forward until he was crouched immediately behind the seat on which they sat.

Suddenly and without warning, a man, whose presence he did not even suspect, sprang upon him.

As Patsy's body went down under the weight of his foe, both hands were pinned beneath his breast.

A heavy hand grasped the back of his neck and pressed his face into the straw, half suffocating him. Still he would have turned upon his back in spite of the great strength of the man astride of him had not the latter called for help.

The old farmer handed the lines to the girl and went to the other man's assistance.

In a few minutes they had Patsy safely bound, gagged and helpless.

"Who is he?" asked the farmer.

"Some detective, I'll stake my life," said the other.

"While he and his pal were trailing Louise from the Imperial to West Jackson street, I trailed them."

"What! I was followed?" cried Lady Louise.

"You were for a fact, and by two."

"Then Yagomez is suspected."

"I guess that's about the size of it," muttered the man in the dark. "The trail's getting too hot to suit me, and the quicker we get things wound up the better."

All this time the wagon was bowling through the streets leading southwestward, but Patsy had no idea of the course which was being pursued.

"What will we do with this fellow?" asked the farmer.

"Wait till we get there with him," muttered the other man.

"Why, are you going to take him all the way with us?" asked Louise.

"Well, you don't think we will drop him along the way?"

"But that might give away the whole business."

"I don't see how. You are not silly enough to suppose this fellow will ever see any of his friends again?"

"Well, I should hope not," was the cold-blooded reply.

Then the three lapsed into silence, and Patsy was left lying helpless in the bottom of the wagon to ruminate over his desperate fix.

How long the wagon rattled over the paved streets he could only guess, but the time seemed many hours to the chafing, helpless young man. There were times when the wheels struck asphalt, and toward the end of the journey Patsy was sure they were passing over ordinary macadamized roads and even what are known as dirt roads.

While they carried him thus far away from the center of Chicago, he had time to do a good deal of thinking.

He knew who the woman was. Chick had told him, and, of course, he knew all about the celebrated shoplifter's many daring operations before she was

compelled to fly from New York, but this was the first time he had ever seen her.

The man who had overpowered him, he suspected, was none other than Black Bart, though there was no way to confirm the impression, as the trio were very careful to mention no names after Louise had, evidently by a slip, pronounced Yagámez's name.

Who the farmer was Patsy, of course, didn't know, but he believed it was a professional crook in disguise.

If the lad expected to see the place where he was being taken he was doomed to surprise.

Just as a few gleams of light began to come into the wagon, indicating the approach of daylight, he was carefully blindfolded.

Then he knew they were nearing their destination, and would not take chances of their prisoner getting a view of his surroundings when they should take him from the wagon.

At last the team made a turn to the right. The farmer got down and opened a gate. The girl drove through and stopped the team until the farmer closed the gate and resumed his seat in the wagon.

Then the journey was continued over a rather uneven road for five minutes, at the end of which time another gate was passed, and then the team stopped.

The night ride was over.

Patsy had run the rascals to their hiding-place, but not just exactly in the manner he originally planned.

Where it was, or what kind of a place it was, he had no means of knowing, for he was carried like a bag of wheat from the wagon into a house.

"Now that we've got him here, what will we do with him?" asked the farmer.

"Well, we're not going to set him up as our guest and then send him back to his friends, the police, I reckon," growled the other man.

"Nor will there be any murdering done this time, let me tell you that," interposed the woman.

"Well, who's talking about murder?" was the retort. "A man can die without being murdered, can't

he? For instance, if he gets shut up a week or two in a hole without food or water he will not have much life left in his body, and no one to blame for it but himself."

"You don't mean to shut him up in the——"

"Certainly. Why not?"

"Have you forgotten who is there already?"

"I don't mean her part of it. We'll chuck him into the other room with the valuables. He's as helpless as any of the other things that are there, and he couldn't get out if he had the use of his hands and feet, which, of course, we don't intend to give him."

After a little further parleying Patsy was picked up by the two men and carried down what seemed to him to be three flights of stairs.

At last they flung him on a pile of something soft and left him.

He heard their retreating steps, heard a heavy door close, and some bolts shot. Then all was silent as the grave.

They had not even removed the bandage from his eyes, yet he knew he might as well have it on for all the good his eyes could do him.

There was no doubt in his mind that he was in some sort of underground apartment.

The place was not damp, but the atmosphere was close and almost stifling.

Patsy was not one to give up and submit to such imprisonment without a struggle. He knew that his bonds must be unusually strong and secure, else his captors wouldn't have left him so well satisfied with their work.

And even if he could rid himself of the thongs, would it help him any?

Nevertheless, he did not lie there a minute in helpless dejection.

The only way he could move was to roll around like a barrel, and this he proceeded to do.

But several revolutions brought him up against a box.

In the collision he injured his forehead.

It struck something sharp, and the result was a rather painful wound.

Painful as his injury was, Patsy welcomed it joyfully.

If there was something within reach sharp enough to cut the skin on his forehead, why would it not cut a rope with the proper application?

Carefully he moved his head till his cheek touched the sharp projection.

It was a nail protruding from a box.

The discovery gave Patsy a thrill of joy.

The means to free himself from his bonds were close at hand.

By wriggling around for five minutes he succeeded in getting the cord which held his hands together behind his back against the sharp edge of the nail.

Ten minutes later he had cut through the thong and his hands were free.

To free his feet also, and remove the bandage from his eyes and the gag from his mouth, was very little trouble.

Some little time followed before he succeeded in getting the blood to circulate freely in his benumbed limbs.

Then he fished a match from an inside pocket and lighted it.

He had not much time to look around, but while the match burned he saw enough to give him a correct idea of his surroundings.

The place he was in had neither window nor visible door.

That it was an underground apartment there could be no doubt. His captors must have left by a way he could not trace during the time the match burned.

As far as he could see a stone floor and four solid walls of stones hemmed him in.

But he saw enough of the room's contents to realize that it was the storage apartment or hiding-place of a vast amount of valuable plunder.

He was in the hands of a powerful gang of robbers, and this was their secret storeroom.

Would he ever be able to get out of it alive?

CHAPTER VI.

WHAT HAPPENED TO PATSY UNDER GROUND.

Patsy would have given its weight in gold for his trusted bull's-eye lantern. He had three or four matches left after lighting the first one and taking the hasty survey of his prison. But if he had had a box at his touch he would not have dared to light many on account of the almost airless condition of the room.

The best he could do was to wait.

Maybe some one would come down to look after his welfare or security, and then he would fight for his liberty, if not for his life.

If he only knew where the door was he could put himself in a position to be ready for an unexpected assault upon his jailer.

But without a suitable light he was powerless to locate the means of entrance, whatever it was.

He could therefore do nothing but wait, and wait he did.

Hours passed. How many he had no means of knowing.

It seemed an eternity to him.

A day must have passed, he at last told himself.

Finally, the young man was sure he had been in the underground prison not only a day but a night. He began to suffer from hunger and particularly from thirst.

Did they indeed intend to leave him there to perish for want of food and drink?

Just when the brave fellow began to despair, a noise—the first he had heard since his jailers deserted him, except what he had made himself—struck his ears.

It was a metallic grating sound, but no music by Sousa's band ever seemed sweeter to Patsy.

He knew what it meant. Some one was coming into his dismal prison. And that meant liberty, if his powers and cunning did not fail.

The sound came from the right, where he was sure a solid wall had confronted his eyes when he got that brief view by aid of the match.

He had just time to crouch behind a big box, whose outlines he could feel but not see, when a glimmer of light appeared from the place where he had heard the sound.

For some seconds afterward a dead silence prevailed.

He dared not look out from beyond his box for fear his visitor would be put on guard and spoil everything.

Finally, the person, whoever it was, advanced cautiously, throwing a light in front.

The light came near, and the intruder's footsteps told Patsy that the visitor was within a few feet of his hiding-place.

If he struck for liberty he must do it now or fail.

Summoning all his strength for the final struggle, he sprang to his feet and made a rush at the person.

Just as a stifled shriek rang out and his hands were reaching for the intruder's throat, the truth flashed upon him like a lightning bolt.

His visitor was a woman.

Before he could touch her she let go of the candle which she carried and dropped in a heap upon the floor.

The candle fell wick downward, and was extinguished.

Instantly all was impenetrable darkness again.

Now it was that Patsy blessed his stars that he had not uselessly burned his few matches making a vain investigation of his prison.

He groped upon the floor till he recovered the candle, and then he soon had a light.

The woman lay prostrate at his feet. He realized that she had been terribly frightened and was in a dead faint.

By the feeble light he saw she was young, very beautiful, and possessed all the features of a refined person.

"Five to one she's a prisoner like myself," thought Patsy. "I remember now those words of Lady Louise to Black Bart when he announced his intention to pen me in down here. She said: 'Have you

forgotten who is there already?' and he replied: 'I don't mean her part of it. We'll chuck him in the other part with the valuables.'

"Well, this is the 'lier' without doubt, poor unfortunate! I wonder who she is, and why they made her a prisoner. Then, again, I wonder how on earth or under the earth she managed to get in here."

"If she'd be so obliging as to come around, I'd soon find out. She's left the door open for me, but if I leave her here and skip by myself, may I never look in Nick's face again."

Thus muttering, the detective set to work to restore the young lady to consciousness.

He could do little else but chafe her hands and fan her with his hat. It was slow work, but he had his reward at last.

It was all he could do to prevent her from relapsing into another faint as soon as she recovered enough to realize her surroundings.

But Patsy's tact was almost equal to that of his great tutor, and in a few words he explained that he, like she, was a prisoner.

It was not long until the two understood each other's situation pretty well, and Patsy found out, as Nick would have known at once, that the girl was Alice, the missing daughter of Lester Allen, the silk importer. But as Patsy had not heard the story Nick told to Chick while he was riding, a helpless prisoner, to this out-of-the-way place, the account which Miss Allen gave him of her abduction and imprisonment was in the nature of news to him.

"I've been a prisoner in a room somewhat like this out there somewhere," she said, pointing to the door in the wall.

"How long I've been there I don't know, but it must be a week since I was brought here and shut up in the dungeon."

"My meals have been served by a big negress, who has been my jailer."

"When she brought me my supper to-night, she was laboring under the influence of liquor, and when

she went out I imagined she did not turn the key in the lock as she closed the door.

"After I had eaten my meal I tried the door, with scarcely a hope that the negress had made such a blunder. But it yielded to my touch. Then I got my candle and left my prison-room.

"The door swung open into a large corridor.

"The first thing I discovered after passing through was that she had left the immense key in the lock—forgot it; I suppose.

"I removed it, groped my way by aid of my dim light across the corridor and ran up against a similar door.

"Something prompted me to fit the key into the lock before me. I did, and opened the door to your room.

"Of course, I hoped to find a means of escape by that way. I never dreamed I was opening another prison door."

"Well," said Patsy, cheerfully, "we'll now see which is the way out. It may be that the drunken negress left other doors unbolted in her maudlin retreat. Come, we'll see."

He led the way into the corridor, she timidly following.

By aid of the candle, Patsy followed the corridor about twenty feet until it ended at the foot of a short flight of stone steps.

At the top of the steps was a trap-door.

Patsy carefully ascended and tried the door.

It was securely locked.

With a feeling of disappointment, but by no means of hopelessness, he descended and reported his discovery to Miss Allen.

"What can we do?" she asked, almost ready to cry with disappointment.

Before Patsy could reply an unexpected thing happened.

A noise as of some one at the trap-door above broke the stillness of their surroundings.

"It required the quick wit of a pupil of Nick Carter to meet the emergency."

Without saying a word, Patsy threw one arm around Miss Allen's waist and literally carried her back along the corridor.

The door to the room she had occupied was still open, and Patsy carried her through, closing the door after him.

At the same time he extinguished the candle, leaving them in total darkness. Then he gently pushed Alice behind him and took a position near the door.

"Heavens, if she should lock us in!" whispered Alice.

"She can't. I've got the key. We'll do the locking in. Sh-h!"

Some one was fumbling at the door outside. Then the door swung open, and a black face, with a candle held overhead, peered in.

CHAPTER VII.

THE FARMHOUSE NEAR PULLMAN.

Patsy lost no moments in observation. He took only enough time to observe that it was the negress who had acted as Miss Allen's jailer, and that the young lady had not been mistaken in the colored woman's condition.

The latter leaned heavily against the side of the door as she peered inside.

Before her bleared eyes could fully penetrate the darkness of the underground chamber, Patsy threw his arm behind her neck and gave her such a forward jerk that, in her half-helpless state of intoxication, she pitched headlong across the dungeonlike place.

The candle flew from her hand and struck against the opposite wall, extinguishing the light.

Without waiting to see the effect of her fall, Patsy once more threw an arm around Miss Allen's waist, and hastily drew her through the doorway into the corridor again.

To slam the solid stone door shut was the work of a moment only. Then he inserted the key, turned it, and the negress, instead of Miss Allen, was a prisoner.

"We should have very little trouble getting out

this time," said Patsy to his companion, in a low tone, "for she surely left the way open when she missed her prison key and hastened back after it."

"But there are others up there, maybe."

"If they are they must surely all be more intoxicated than the negress; else they would have seen her condition and not have trusted her with the keys of these dungeons. My belief is that she was left alone in the house and took advantage of her freedom from being watched to indulge her appetite for liquor."

"However, we'll soon see. Please hold the candle till I gather up my late bonds. I may need them to do a little tying up myself before I get through with this gang."

Miss Allen by this time had begun to disclose unusual nerve for a young lady, which Patsy quickly observed, and his admiration for her grew to prodigious proportions.

Without a tremor she took the candle, as they entered the opposite chamber, and held it aloft, while Patsy went in search of the cord which he had taken from his hands.

As he was groping around in search of them, Miss Allen suddenly uttered a cry of surprise.

Patsy looked up. He saw Miss Allen's eyes riveted upon a pile of silver plate lying promiscuously in one corner—a mere parcel of the great stores of valuable articles of every description which were scattered around as they had been hastily dumped in this underground hiding-place.

"What is it?" he asked.

Before replying, Alice took a few steps until she stood over the pile of silver service.

"I thought I was not mistaken," she said. "This silver was stolen from our house only a few weeks ago. Isn't it strange that I should find it here?"

"Not strange at all," replied Patsy, "for unless Nick Carter is on the wrong lay, we are in the hiding-place, or under the hiding-place, of the most powerful, desperate gang of thieves and burglars in America. But we must lose no time in getting out of this. Come!"

They left the treasure-chamber, and Patsy carefully locked the close-fitting door behind him.

He was not surprised in finding the trap-door at the head of the stone steps not only unlocked but wide open.

He first carefully and noiselessly ascended alone. After peering around above, he motioned to Miss Allen to come up also. They found themselves in a cellar such as is under most country houses.

There were numerous bins for vegetables and fruit built around the sides, and the trap through which they emerged was part of the floor of one of these bins. A quantity of straw lay on one side, which was evidently scattered over the well-fitted trap when it was closed, and was brushed aside whenever it was in use.

From this cellar they had no trouble in ascending to the living part of the house, but Patsy used great caution as he proceeded.

A very little investigation convinced him that his hastily-formed theory expressed in the subcellar to Miss Allen had been correct. The house was deserted.

Undoubtedly the negress had been left in charge, and had been unfaithful to her trust.

The coast was apparently clear, and the quicker he could get Miss Allen to a place of safety the better he would feel satisfied. Then he would turn his attention to this house of mystery and its rascally inmates.

By peering out of the open door, he saw that it was an ordinary farmhouse standing in the center of its own grounds, some distance from the highway, as near as he could determine in the darkness of the night.

Nor was there another house anywhere near by.

He was about to step outside to make a better survey of the premises when a savage growl greeted him.

A large bulldog rose almost at his feet and was showing his ugly teeth. Patsy realized his danger and looked about for some weapon, but too late. The brute gave a spring at his throat.

Its hot breath touched his face just as the report of a revolver came over his shoulder, and the dog fell dead at his feet.

He quickly turned and caught Miss Allen as she tottered and almost fell.

A pistol dropped from her hand at the same time.

The strain of the terrible danger from which she had rescued her deliverer had almost overcome her again.

But by a brave exertion she rallied and relieved Patsy of his support of her.

"How fortunate that I found that pistol on the dining-room table after you passed through," she said, in a voice that trembled in spite of her great effort at self-control. "I suppose the negress had it there ready for any emergency, and I was bringing it to you when that dog made his attack."

"You are quite a shot, Miss Allen," complimented Patsy.

"I have taken lessons in the use of pistols," she said, modestly.

"Well, you saved me from an ugly fight with that brute. But we must be on the alert now. No telling what the sound of that pistol shot may pull down on us. I guess we'd better get away from this place as speedily as possible."

"I will follow your directions, sir," was the reply.

"Then also follow me as well as my directions. Better let me take your hand, for we must use no light, and the night is very dark."

He started out of the house and carefully made his way across a yard toward a building which was evidently a barn.

"We'll see if there's a horse in this building to aid us in getting to a place of safety," he whispered.

Almost immediately following these words, he stopped suddenly and drew Miss Allen down behind a pump which stood just in their way.

"Don't move or utter a word," he whispered in her ear.

She complied, and at the same time looked in the direction he was peering. She saw what he saw—

the outlines of a man's form leaning against a high board fence about four rods in front of them.

The man was either listening, with all the powers of his sense of hearing, or trying to penetrate the shadows of the background against the house in which Patsy and Miss Allen were concealed from his view.

Patsy grasped his pistol and awaited developments.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE MOB ON THE ILLINOIS CENTRAL.

The man at the fence stood perfectly still and quiet for several minutes. He was seemingly straining his senses of hearing and seeing.

When neither gave him satisfaction, he climbed to the top of the fence and called:

"Hello! hello! I say, Diggs!"

Then he listened again.

Receiving no reply, he was evidently surprised. He muttered something and began to descend from the fence on the side of the house. Before he reached the ground, however, he stopped, having apparently concluded that it would be best for him to go slow.

Again he called:

"Hi there! Diggs! Anybody at home?"

Patsy whispered in Alice's ear to remain still. Then he left the shadow of the pump and walked over toward the man on the fence, exclaiming, as he went:

"What do you want?"

"Why, I thought I heard a shot over this way a while ago, and just run over to see if anything happened. That ain't you, is it, Diggs?"

"No. Diggs is not at home. You did hear a shot. Diggs' dog attacked me and I had to shoot him."

"Killed that there bulldog?"

"Yes."

The man now descended from the fence with alacrity.

"Then I needn't care about keeping upon this 'ere fence," he said. "That dog was a terror, and

it was wuth a man's life to invade these here premises when he was loose, which was mostly at night."

By this time he was close to Patsy and was peering into the latter's face.

"Pears to me I never seed you before," he said, trying to get a distinct view of the features of the man before him.

"No; I'm new to this neighborhood. Just came out from the city to see Diggs. But he's not at home, nor anybody else, I guess."

"Shoo! You must be mistaken. Black Nance is somewhere around, I guess. Never knew that critter to be absent an hour for two years."

"Well, she's not around now," said Patsy.

"That beats me. T'other members of the family often go away together, but Nance is always on hand. Sure Nance is not at home?"

"Quite sure. I've been all through the house."

"Doors not locked?"

"No."

"That's queer."

"What is Diggs' business?"

"Gardener and huckster."

"How long has he lived here?"

"Bout twenty years, I reckon. He was livin' in this here house when I moved in the neighborhood, an' that was in seventy-seven."

"Pretty nice sort of man, isn't he?"

"Never heard nothin' agin' him, except that he's so durned unsociable. Never has no company, and doesn't seem to keer a cent for anything but to huckster, raise truck, go to market, and make money."

"Much of a family?"

"Not now. No wife. Miss Diggs, the mother of Don, run away with the hired hand three years ago. Leastwise, they both turned up missin' one morning, and the old woman left a letter sayin' she had gone with a handsomer man. Then old Josh became glummer than ever and more unsociable."

"After that him and Don, and Black Nance, lived here alone until Don went up the country a year or so ago and brought home a wife."

"The young woman's right good-lookin', but she's too alfired 'fraid of work to suit people in this here neighborhood. None of the wimin visit her."

"Where's Don?"

"Hain't been around fur several days. Nobody asks about the Diggss' affairs, and I reckon no one knows where he is."

"Don't they have any visitors?"

"Sometimes. I've seen men here occasionally. I understand they're commission dealers from the city who come out here to make contracts with Diggs for garden truck and the like. Sometimes they stay all night. One was here to-day."

"How soon can I get to Chicago?"

"Well, you're in Chicago now, even if this is the country. You mean about State and Madison streets, I reckon, or somewhere thereabouts."

"That's it."

"Yes. Humph! Ord'narily you could git there in an hour or so, for Pullman's jest over yonder. But Pullman's the last place on earth you'd go to now to ketch a train. This 'ere strike has cut off all sooburban trains."

"I reckon the strikers are havin' considerable of a time up that way. See the light! Must be burning things."

Patsy did see the light away off to the northeast, and somehow the absence of the Diggss and that light connected themselves in his mind.

"Then how will I get back to the city?"

The countryman did not think about asking him how he had got out of the city so far, but answered:

"Best plan would be to hire a hoss and ride back. It's about nine o'clock now. You'd get there by one or two o'clock, I reckon."

"Where can I get a couple of horses?"

"A couple? You can't ride two."

"No, but I've got a friend with me."

"Where?"

"Not far off."

"Well, I've got a couple, but as you're a stranger and these are hard times to trust people——"

"Why can't you get a wagon and drive us in? I'll pay you well."

"Be jing! I'm your man. I'll get my team out right away. I'd like to see what them fellers up there are doin' to the keers, anyhow, and I'll kill two birds with the same stone. Jest wait here and I'll be back in a jiffy with the team."

"Where do you live?"

"Half a mile up the road there—fust house on the right."

"Then go ahead. We'll follow you and be there when you get hitched up."

The talkative neighbor hurried away and Patsy returned to Miss Allen.

Half an hour later the three were flying toward Chicago in the substantial covered wagon of Diggs' neighbor, drawn by a good team of horses.

The farmer had been surprised when he discovered that Patsy's companion was a young lady, but, beyond giving vent to a low whistle, he made no comment nor asked any questions.

They had been driving an hour when the farmer and Patsy, looking ahead, perceived a covered wagon drawn at a very slow pace over the road, as if it were heavily laden.

Suddenly the farmer cried out:

"By gum! you're in luck. There's Diggs' wagon now."

Instantly Patsy was on his guard.

Miss Allen was sitting on a back seat in the shadow of the wagon's top, and was invisible to any one outside of the wagon.

Patsy, who sat with the driver, left his seat and joined Miss Allen in the obscurity of the curtains.

As soon as he was in concealment, he said to the driver:

"Now, on your life, do not betray our presence to the people in that wagon."

"Why, I thought you went out there to see them," gasped the driver.

"I did. But I'm an officer of the law, and they are criminals."

"What! Diggs a criminal? I'll——"

"You'll do just as I tell you," said Patsy, sternly, "or I'll put a bullet through you with the pistol I hold in my hand. I've no time to parley, for there is the Diggs wagon. Don't fail me."

"Oh, I'll not fail you," muttered the scared farmer. As the farmer whipped up his horses and passed

Diggs' jogging team, Patsy saw that the old rascal was alone on the front seat. He had no means of knowing whether there was any one inside or not.

But they passed on, and the Diggs team was soon left far behind.

They were now near the tracks of the Illinois Central Road, along which long lines of freight cars were scattered for miles, many of them filled with valuable goods worth thousands, if not millions, of dollars.

Two miles up the track there was trouble. Cars had been fired, and a mob, which, as is now known, was led, not by railroad men or strikers, but by criminals and mischief makers of the worst kind, was engaged in setting fire to freight cars and their rich contents.

The shouts of the mob came distinctly to the ears of Patsy and his companions. As they drew nearer to the scene of riot, the confusion was added to by the noise of the discharge of musketry.

The militia had evidently arrived on the spot and fired on the mob.

"Whip up your horses, old man," shouted Patsy. "Let's get there as soon as we can."

The farmer complied.

Five minutes later they came in sight of the flying mob, which was retreating in confusion up the tracks, while the militia and firemen were busy trying to extinguish the fire among the burning cars.

Suddenly a man sprang up from the roadside, presented two pistols at the head of the astonished farmer, and exclaimed:

"Stop, and on your life do not resist!"

Patsy recognized the voice first.

In an instant he cried from within the darkness of his place of concealment:

"Nick! For Heaven's sake, put them down. You've made a mistake."

It was, indeed, Nick Carter. The great detective also recognized his young assistant's voice.

Down went his pistols.

"Great guns! Patsy, is it you? Where are you?"

"Here, Nick!" said Patsy, climbing out in front, "who did you think you were holding up?"

"Why, Black Bart and his partner in crime, the farmer known as Joshua Diggs."

"Well, you're too previous. This is Diggs' nearest neighbor, and an honest man. We passed your quarry some minutes ago. Where's Chick?"

"Back there in charge of a wounded person who has given the night's snap away."

"Who is the wounded person, Nick?"

"You'll be surprised when you know who it is," said Nick, jumping into the wagon. Then to the driver he said:

"Whip 'em up, and we'll take Chick and his charge aboard."

CHAPTER IX.

NICK'S NARROW ESCAPE.

When Nick Carter, after waiting nearly twenty-four hours for Patsy to return, said to his principal assistant—as recorded at the close of Chapter IV.: "Chick, Black Bart and Lady Louise have captured Patsy; we've got to move, and move quickly, too," he had decided how the move should be made.

"We must try to strike the trail from that West Jackson street house. I'm going down there to make some investigations.

"You may meanwhile go to the Imperial and take a peep at the Spaniard. Join me in an hour outside the Jackson street place. Then we'll decide what the next move will be."

The two men touched up their disguises slightly and started out on their respective missions.

Nick didn't go direct to the house on Jackson street. He first hunted up the policeman of the beat for the purpose of making some inquiry.

He made up to look like a respectable mechanic of some kind out for an evening's stroll.

Luckily for him, he ran across the patrolman almost opposite the house he was about to investigate.

"I beg your pardon," he said, accosting the officer, "but can you tell me anything about the character of the house across the street with the English basement?"

The officer gave Nick a sweeping glance, and then answered, Yankee fashion:

"Looking for board?"

Instantly Nick took the cue and answered affirmatively.

"Well, then, I guess you'll make no mistake if you take up quarters in Mrs. Hurst's house. She has the reputation of setting a good table, and is a neat housekeeper, I guess. I know one of her boarders, and he praises her table especially. You see, she has a brother who lives down near Pullman somewhere—

a gardener—and he supplies her with fresh vegetables right from his place."

Nick congratulated himself inwardly. At last he was on the trail hotfooted.

The policeman thought he was hesitating, probably, for he asked, while Nick looked contemplatively across at the house:

"Do you work at night?"

Nick's quick wit again helped him on.

"Yes," he said, "and that's just why I was wondering whether the place would suit me."

"Then you don't need to hesitate, for all her boarders are night men and sleep in daytime. The house is quiet as a graveyard in the forenoon and deserted at night."

"What do her boarders do?"

"Most of 'em work at the stockyards, I believe. Go over and see Mrs. Hurst. I'm sure you'll like the place—if you can get in. She's nearly always full, however."

"Thank you," said Nick. "I'll see what she can do for me."

He rang the bell, and was admitted by a rather comely-looking young woman. In response to a request to see Mrs. Hurst, he was shown upstairs to a room in the rear of the house, on the second floor.

"Mrs. Hurst isn't very well to-night, sir, and will see you in her room," said the maid.

Nick was rather suspicious at first, but when he was ushered into Mrs. Hurst's presence, his doubts were somewhat removed.

She really appeared ill and was reclining in a large easy-chair, clad in dressing-gown and slippers.

It was an elderly, motherly-looking woman, who greeted him kindly as she looked at him through a pair of blue spectacles.

"Want to get board, do you?" she asked, in a tone of voice which to any one but a shrewd detective would have made the person addressed almost love her immediately.

"I've been recommended to your house by the policeman of the beat," replied Nick.

"Oh, yes! by Mulcahey. It's very kind of him, but I hardly know about taking you. I'm pretty well crowded now. Have you recommendations which you can give me? I've got to be very careful who I take in—there are so many dishonest people who pose as respectable persons these days."

"Well, I assure you, Mrs. Hurst, that you are in

the presence of an honest man this time," said Nick, with more meaning to his words than he believed she realized.

"Well, sit down," she smiled, encouragingly, motioning to a chair which stood with its back to the door; "sit down, and I'll see what can be done."

Nick didn't fail to observe that the chair stood so that if he sat in it his back would be toward any one who might enter the room. So, in taking his seat, he turned the chair half around and faced midway between the place where Mrs. Hurst sat and the entrance to the room.

Then he gave her a quick glance to see what effect the movement had on her.

Apparently it had none. Mrs. Hurst, it seemed to him, beamed more pleasantly on him than ever.

She looked the personification of pleasantness.

Shrewd as the great detective was, he had met a woman who came nearer to outwitting him than had ever occurred to him in his professional life.

He said afterward that not one criminal in a thousand would have planned a trap with such fine details as to anticipate that the detective to be trapped would do just what Nick did—turn the chair in order to give him a view of the entrance to the room.

Nick always felt angry with himself for not noticing the closet door which was just behind his chair after he had turned it.

He had scarcely sunk into his seat when it seemed to him that the house suddenly fell upon him.

A man had stepped out of the closet and brought down on Nick's uncovered head a sandbag with such terrible effect that one could almost hear the victim's skull crack.

There was no mistaking the effect upon the detective. No human being could simulate that state of collapse which followed the blow.

His body huddled up in the chair in a helpless heap, his hands fell upon each side, and his face took on the hue of death.

The man who dealt the blow placed his hand on Nick's head where the blow had fallen. The result seemed to be satisfactory.

"That settles him," he said, to Mrs. Hurst. "His skull is crushed in, and I guess Nick Carter has at last met his fate, and far from home at that."

The effect upon the pretended invalid was surprising. She was on her feet at once.

"We must lose no time in getting rid of all evi-

dences of this work and leave nothing to tell this detective's friends what became of him. Quick, lift him on the bed."

The man complied.

Nick's helpless form was carried over to the heavily-draped bed and laid on it.

"Now the naphtha. Use plenty of it. The destruction must be complete."

She produced several large bottles of a white fluid—one of the most volatile liquids known to chemists—naphtha, and the two proceeded to scatter it over every part of the room.

Nick's clothes were drenched with it, as was also the bed.

"Wasn't it fortunate that Bart captured this fellow's cub and learned that I was being watched?" said Yagamez, as he worked. "I was just in time to see the fellow leave his hotel and come here. The time he took parleying with the policeman across the way fortunately gave us time to set the trap."

"But has he no aids in his work here?" anxiously asked Mrs. Hurst.

"Why, certainly, the cub who is safe and sound in your brother's cellar at the farm. Oh, we're safe enough. These New York detectives never give anything away to the Chicago force, and the secret of their mission West will die with them. I'm sorry, though, to destroy this house. We may have trouble in getting another home for the boys as convenient."

"Well, come on," urged Mrs. Hurst. "There's enough naphtha in here to make sure of total destruction before the firemen can get any advantage. I'll see that the girl I send up here to light the gas does the work so that we can get out of the way all right."

Several minutes later Mrs. Hurst carefully closed both windows and followed her male companion hastily from the room.

The door had scarcely closed behind them when the window sash, which she had closed, was lifted, and a man sprang into the room.

It was faithful Chick.

He had fortunately almost run over Yagamez as he left the Palmer House.

It took him a very little time to discover that the Spaniard was tracking Nick.

So Chick followed Yagamez.

On the way Chick studied out how it happened

that the Spaniard was able to identify Nick in his disguise.

The reason was evident.

Nick wore the same disguise in which he traveled to Chicago.

Black Bart gave Yagamez a description of it, and put the Spaniard on his guard.

But how had Black Bart discovered Nick's identity on the train?

Nick had already explained that to Chick.

The latter had been too precipitate in following Black Bart upon the Elevated station at Twenty-third street in New York.

Bart, after entering the coach next to the last, walked through to the rear coach, and looking back, saw Chick fishing his torn-up message from the dust-can on the station platform.

He knew it was detective work, and that his message would probably be detective property before he could get away for Chicago.

Yet he carried out the trip as planned, but he was on the lookout for the detective all the way.

Being one of the shrewdest criminals in America, he finally singled Nick out as the shadow, and we know what occurred.

Chick rushed to the bed where Nick's naphtha-saturated form lay.

His first act was to tear a wig from the detective's head.

It was a wig which made Nick's head appear longer than it really was. And it was this peculiar wig which saved his life.

The cork top was crushed in by the blow.

Chick put his hand upon Nick's head on the place beneath where the sandbag had fallen.

"Thank God!" he exclaimed. "Nick is only stunned. But unless I get him out of this in a jiffy, we'll both be dead men."

He picked his insensible chief up like a sack of meal and carried him through the window upon the roof of a porch, which extended along the rear of the house, carefully closing the sash behind him.

In less than two minutes he had his charge safe upon the ground of the back yard, and then hastened with the unconscious form to an alley in the rear of the stable.

Scarcely had he reached the alley when there was an explosion. Instantly the Jackson street house was a mass of flames. Its inmates rushed from the

basement upon the street just in time to get out with their lives.

The firemen could do nothing to save the house.

Next morning's papers stated that a servant girl had been cleaning the carpet with naphtha in Mrs. Hurst's room, second floor, back, when the explosion occurred, probably through some carelessness on her part.

This servant was missing, and she had no doubt been burned up with the building.

Mrs. Hurst, the paper stated, left, late as it was, for her brother's farm, near Pullman, and the amount of insurance could not be ascertained.

CHAPTER X.

WERE THERE ANY MISSING IN CHICAGO?

Mrs. Hurst did start to Pullman after the fire? She took a cab, and Yagamez was with her.

Another cab, with its lights reversed and shaded, followed. In it were Nick Carter and Chick.

Nick had wholly recovered from the effect of Yagamez's stunning blow. His saturated clothes had been hastily removed, and new ones, obtained from the nearest clothing store, were substituted.

Thus equipped the two detectives started on the trail of Mrs. Hurst and the Spaniard. They had no trouble in keeping the latter's cab in sight by aid of its lights, and of remaining undiscovered themselves by shading their own lights.

Both cabs reached the vicinity of the Illinois Central tracks just about the time the rioters were at the height of their work.

Something in the mob's work seemed to fascinate Mrs. Hurst and Yagamez, and they drove close up to the scene of the operations.

Meanwhile, Nick and Chick left their conveyance, and Nick crept up to the rear of the other cab.

While the two criminals were watching the exciting scenes along the track from the west window of their cab, a slight noise from the other side diverted their attention. Both looked around at once.

There, peering through the window, was the face of the man they believed they had murdered and burned to ashes.

The Spaniard threw open the opposite door, and dashing out, ran like a greyhound toward the mob.

Mrs. Hurst uttered a shriek and followed him.

At that moment the militia fired on the rioters.

Mrs. Hurst was directly in the line of the flying bullets.

One of them struck her.

She tottered and fell just as Chick overtook her. A hasty examination showed him that the wound was fatal.

Taking advantage of the woman's condition and terror, after serious threats of the severe sentence which would be imposed on the others, Chick forced a confession out of her.

She told him that her brother and Black Bart were about that time, under cover of the riot, robbing some richly-laden cars a mile farther down, the contents of which would be carried away in Diggs' farm wagon.

Then she fainted.

At that moment Nick came up from an unsuccessful chase after Yagomez. Terror at sight of the dreaded detective, alive and well, had seemed to give wings to the Spaniard, and he succeeded in eluding Nick.

Chick was left in charge of the dying woman, while Nick started down the road to intercept a covered wagon, which he believed was the Diggs conveyance, probably loaded with the stolen valuables.

His meeting thereby with Patsy has already been described.

As they drove on toward the place where Chick stood over the expiring Mrs. Hurst, Patsy touched Nick on the shoulder and said:

"I have a young lady back here who escaped with me from the Diggs farmhouse."

Nick looked around and distinguished the dim outlines of Alice.

"You are Miss Alice Allen?" he said, to her no inconsiderable astonishment.

"That is my name," she replied.

Patsy muttered something under his breath. What he said to himself was this:

"Well, I'll be jiggered if that don't beat fortunetelling."

"I never knew the girl's name myself, because I didn't ask her what it was, and here's Nick speaking to her as if he had known her since she was a baby, and yet he can't see her face."

Explanations were out of order, however, for at this point the commander of the militia came up to the wagon just as it stopped where Chick stood guard over Mrs. Hurst.

The young militia officer's face was distinctly to be seen on account of the light from the burning cars.

As he approached the wagon, Alice gave a little scream of delight, and cried:

"Guy! oh, Guy!"

In a moment she had leaped from the wagon and was in the arms of her lover, Captain Guy Vernon.

While the two reunited young people were thus enjoying their strange meeting, a lieutenant hurried up, and, saluting his superior officer, said:

"The leader of the rioters, that handsome young fellow, was killed, and there's something queer about it."

"He's a woman, sir," came the paradoxical and surprising reply.

It was true. The youth who had precipitated the rioters upon this particular part of the track was left behind, shot through the heart.

It was not only a woman, but, as Nick saw at a glance, Lady Louise, the queen of shoplifters.

Such was her fate at last.

She had taken upon herself the task of diverting or concentrating attention to that particular quarter while her confederates were operating a mile below.

Nick quickly acquainted Captain Vernon with the state of affairs.

Leaving Alice in the care of the lieutenant, Vernon joined Nick, Chick and Patsy, and the four men were driven by Diggs' neighbor toward the scene of the robbery, a mile below.

"We're too late!" exclaimed Chick, before they had gone far, pointing ahead, where a fresh conflagration had broken out. "They have robbed the cars and set fire to them to hide their crime."

"Then we must overtake them before they get their swag to Diggs' house," replied Nick. "Whip up, old man, and fifty dollars is yours if you overtake them."

Half an hour later they sighted the Diggs wagon just as their own presence as pursuers was made known to the robbers.

Then followed a chase for life.

Diggs' horses, though having the heavier load to haul, were fresher than his neighbor's team, and the

robbers succeeded in gaining the cover of Diggs' house.

There the three detectives took up places of watch to prevent the escape of the thieves, while Vernon, mounted on a fresh horse, rode back for a detachment of his company.

He arrived with it about daylight.

Just as the sun arose, Diggs came out and surrendered. Black Bart and a third man followed. The latter was recognized by Vernon as one of the men who had often been seen with Yagamez.

The fellow turned out to be the head of the most daring band of burglars that ever operated in Chicago. It was he and his men who formed Mrs. Hurst's boarders and pretended to belong to the night gang at the stockyards. Their wives were servants in the house.

They brought their pelf to Mrs. Hurst's house, whence it was hauled by her brother to the underground place of storage near Pullman, concealed under vegetables and garden truck.

The whole scheme of robbery was the plan of Yagamez, who turned out to be Mrs. Hurst's son. He got his mother into it, and they had afterward got Diggs and his son Don into partnership. Mrs. Diggs could not be so easily worked, and threatened to give away the scheme. So she and the hired hand were quietly put out of the way, and the story of their elopement was sent forth to account for their sudden disappearance.

All this Nick got from Black Bart; who was induced to make a clean breast of it in return for a promise that he would get a light sentence.

Lady Louise had more lovers than a Mormon elder. She had been Bart's common-law wife. Then she met Don Diggs and went out to aid him and the old man in their work. She and Yagamez were the brains of the gang.

Bart got into the "deal" by getting the numbers of the cars containing Allen's valuable silk shipments, whereby he was able to identify them among the side-tracked cars on the Illinois Central.

Don's trip to New York was for the purpose of getting a ransom for Alice from her brother, or through her brother. Had he succeeded, he and Louise would have taken the money and deserted the rest of the band.

Yagamez was responsible for the abduction of Alice. What his final intentions toward her were, nobody will ever know.

Lady Louise was a noted mesmerist. It was she who had met Alice, and by using her peculiar gift, had easily got the young lady to the farm near Pullman.

While under the spell, Alice wrote the letter dictated to her by Louise, and it was sent to Lester Allen.

Most of Allen's silks were burned up, as the robbers could not carry away one-fifth of the valuable consignment.

Nick left the stolen treasures in the charge of Captain Vernon. He turned over Diggs, the burglar chief, and the negress, Black Nance, to the Chicago authorities. Diggs was sent up for life, and the other two got long terms of imprisonment.

No trace of Yagamez could be found, and Nick left him to the Chicago police.

Black Bart agreed to return to New York without a requisition.

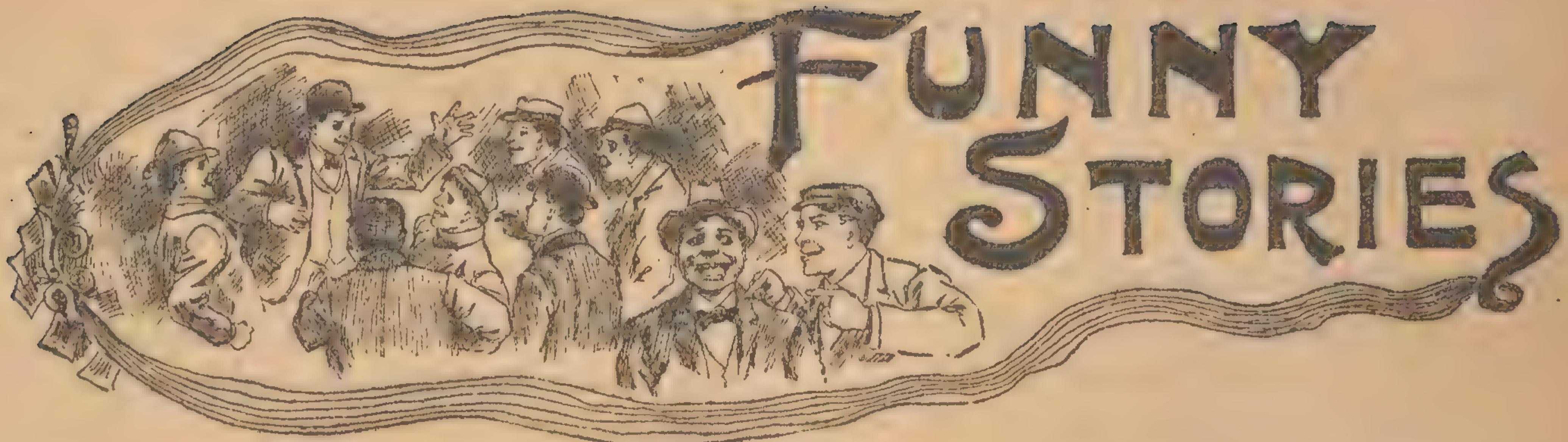
So, on the night of the day of the capture, Nick, Chick and Patsy left Chicago, with their noted prisoner in charge.

At Cleveland Nick stepped into the telegraph office and sent this message back to Chicago:

To CHIEF SHEA'S REPRESENTATIVE:—Will you please count your sixteen hundred thousand people and see whether two or three are not missing?
NICK CARTER.

THE END.

Next week's issue (No. 287) will contain: "Nick Carter's Wedding Gift; or, Landing an Old Offender." Nick's wedding gift wasn't in cut glass or silver—in fact, it was quite out of the ordinary run of wedding gifts. Read next week's issue and find out what it was.



FUNNY STORIES

Fistfulls of funny yarns and loads of laughter. That's what this contest means to everybody who reads the entries printed each week. It means a lot more, though, to the boys who enter the contest. It means a chance to possess some of the finest books ever printed for boys.

Look on page 31 if you want to know how to win a splendid prize.

A World of Fun.

(By Wm. Stevenson, Nova Scotia.)

That man Smithers is a clever fellow. He can write with either hand."

"Is that so? How does he do it?"

"On a typewriter."

White: "Did old Green recover from that railway accident?"

Black: "No; but his wife did—to the tune of two thousand pounds."

Washington: "What's the matter with your clock? It's stopped."

Tailor: "I never wind it up. I use it as a motto."

"What do you mean?"

"No tick here."

John, the baby has swallowed one of your pearl studs."

"Well, for goodness sake send for the doctor right away. I've got to wear that stud to-night."

A man who stuttered badly went to consult a specialist about his affliction. The expert asked:

"Do you stutter all the time?"

"N-n-no," replied the sufferer, "I s-s-tutter only when I t-t-al-k."

There are funny incidents in the life of a photographer. A man came in the other day and looked over all the samples, asking the price of each.

"Do you want a sitting?" I asked.

"I don't see nothin' like what I want," he replied.

I told him that if he would indicate what he wanted that I might arrange it.

"I don't know as you can," he said, "for I don't see nothin' at all like what I want."

I repeated what I had already said. He asked me to sit while he told me.

"You see, it's like this," he began, "I had a girl that I loved, and we was going to get married. She had her

things made up, and we was all but ready when she was taken ill and died, and what I wanted was a picture of me sittin' on her grave weepin'."

I was touched at the homely story of grief, and told him I could send a man with him to the grave and have the picture taken as he desired.

"It's some distance," he said. "It's over in Ireland. I expect it 'ud cost a lot to send over your traps for what I want."

I said it woudl.

"I thought," he answered, "that mebbe you could rig up a grave here in your shop and I would weep on it. And it would do just as well. It's no trouble for me to weep anwyhere."

She (at the desk): "Dear, please tell me how to spell costume. I am writing to mother about my lovely new gown."

He: "Well, are you ready?"

"Yes."

"C-o-st-, cost—"

"Yes."

"tu-, to—"

"Well?"

"Me-, me-nine pounds, as yet unpaid."

"You're a wretch!"

A Few Jokes.

(By Herman Heid, N. Y.)

NAMING THE CHILD.

Now, necessarily, when the new girl baby arrived there was much discussion among the members of the family as to what her name should be.

"We will call her Geraldine," said the fond mother.

"Why not call her 'Esmeralda'?" asked the first grandmother. "I saw that name in a story once and always wanted to try it on a baby."

"Oh," murmured the second grandmother, "that will never do; let us call her 'Fanchou.'"

"But don't you think Eltessa is a pretty name and so odd, too?" put in one of the aunts.

"Excuse me, ladies," ventured the poor father, who

sat near by, "but you seem to forget that we are trying to find a name for a human being and not for a new brand of cigars."

AT THE TELEPHONE.

"Halloo, exchange, I want a thousand."
 "I know lots of people in your fix."
 "I say I want a thousand."
 "So do I."
 "Don't get impudent, miss."
 "Don't let that keep you awake at nights."
 "I want to know if you are going to give me a thousand."
 "What for?"
 "Because I want it."
 "Well, if you get it before I do, ring me up."
 "Are you going to give me a thousand."
 "Wouldn't a hundred do?"
 "No, I want a thousand or nothing."
 "Well, don't bother me if you do, I'm no savings bank."
 "Will you or will you not give me what I ask for?"
 "If I were a man I'd hunt you up and give you something you didn't ask for. You are either insane or trying to be funny."
 "I think the shoe is on the other foot. I shall ask you once more, will you give me number one thousand — Brown, Jones & Robinson."
 "Oh, you want the telephone number one—three ciphers. Why didn't you say so before?"

ADDRESSED IN FULL.

An amusing incident occurred recently at one of the large new London hotels. A scullery maid in writing to her friends in Ireland used the hotel letter paper. The surprise of the manager may be imagined on finding a letter one morning addressed:

Miss M—

Care of —— Hotel,
 All modern improvements; lift. Tariff on application. Terms moderate. London, England.

It was evident that the maid's Irish friend was determined the letter should not miscarry for want of full directions.

Never On the Market Before.

(By Henry Godette, R. I.)

1. Why does a father who has a suit which is too large for him always use a "d" to make them have a good fit?

Because it makes pa pad.

2. Why do baseball players who have missed the ball for the third time, which is caught by the catcher, and are called out by the umpire, remind you of men who are standing in front of the office where they are employed, waiting for the owners to give them more pay before they go back in to work?

Because they are out on a strike.

3. Why is a cobbler a hero?

Because he is always saving some poor soul (sole.).

4. Why is a negro like the ace of spades?
 Because he's dark colored.
5. What word is that which has five letters, which when two are taken out there are six left?
 Sixty.
6. What kind of a tongue is the toughest?
 A shoe tongue.
7. What word is that, which has six letters, which when half of them are taken out there are ten left?
 Tennis.
8. Why is an egg like a pair of oxen harnessed up?
 Because in the center there is a yoke (yolk).
9. Why is a cobbler like a bee?
 Because he uses wax.
10. When is an empty bottle full?
 When it is full of holes.

A Letter From Ireland.

(By Tom Healey, N. Y.)

County Sligo, Ireland,

January 16, 1901.

Dear Nephew: I take my pin in hand to tell ye of the sorrowful death of your cousin Mike about two months ago your uncle felt sick and went to bed in the morning he did not get up so we went for the docter and the dock gave him some bitther medicine and the poor boy said he would rather take bitther as swate so long as both would have the same taste and now I close my letter saling it in black wax with white and black paper. When ye get this letter kape it for two weeks before opinning so as ye will be able to be ready for the sorrowful news, and when Mike O'Conner arrives in America ask him for the letter telling me of the sorrowful death of your cousin and if he does not know what ye means tell it is the letter with the white and black paper sealed in black wax.

So I close my letter with a good-by,

Your loving uncle,

Patrick Michael McCree.

Telling Tales in Mississippi.

(By C. M. Rodgers, Miss.)

Buck Weaver says he was out hunting in a wild country when he found a squirrel that was so wild that after seeing him it ran up a tall tree, as high as it could get and finding it could get no higher he stuck his tail right straight up and tried to climb it.

Bill Martin matched this tale with a gardener who had rich ground. He went out to plant some cucumbers and before leaving the patch one of the vines came up and entangling his feet and legs and winding around his body finally threw him down.

After much struggling he got his hand in his pocket and got his knife and cut himself loose.

Buck and Bill were immediately arrested on a charge of high treason to truth, and brought before the boisterous court. Judge Johnson, P. M., president, found him guilty and sentenced to tell the truth (hard labor) for sixty days, and cider and peanuts for the courts.

Amateur Detective Work.

Boys, in reading one of the Nick Carter stories did you ever try to think ahead and guess who was the criminal in the case?

Each of the readers has a chance to find out how good a detective he is.

He has the facts of the case laid before him just as Nick Carter himself has.

Of course, he has not got Nick's experience or wonderful detective instinct. Still, he can prove whether or not he is a good detective by trying to decide in his own mind what the solution of the mystery is before he has read to the end of the story. The earlier in the story he is able to make his guess and the more accurate it is, the better detective he is.

We want to see what sort of detectives the readers of the NICK CARTER WEEKLY are.

We want one and all of you to write to us, telling us whether you were able to solve the mystery that Nick Carter had to solve before reading to the end of any of the stories.

Tell us how far you read before you arrived at your decision, and just what points guided you in making your decision. Your letters will be printed in this column.

The first letter we print this week is a corker. It was so long that we could not print the whole of it. We are giving you the best part of it. In the opinion of the editor it is a model piece of detective work.

Editor Nick Carter Weekly—

Dear Sir: In the following analysis, aside from the hint furnished by the title and picture, I shall endeavor to give the chain of deduction followed by me in getting at the core of the mystery. The novel, "Nick Carter and the Professor," opens in the first chapter with the description of a grave, or, rather, a vault robbery. In this, it is easily seen that the men are no strangers to the work from their absolute utilization of every second, and business manner. Secondly, they are not merely getting a stiff for dissection—that is, an ordinary stiff, for no crook would risk his precious neck by murdering the watchman for the few dollars he would get from the medical students. And if it was an extraordinary one, what made it so valuable as to cause a murder, to have four men needed for lifting a single corpse, and to make such elaborate preparations for its safe transmission. Either some one wanted the body to dissect on account of a rare disease or wished it for some unknown purpose. Anyhow, the ghouls either were in the employ of such a person or knew that he would pay them highly for the subject. In choosing between these two alternatives, I was inclined to the former by the fact that a criminal, if not a condemned murderer already, or a ruffian of the Bill Sikes style, would hesitate before killing a man, on the mere possibility of getting a large reward for the corpse. On the contrary, if he had been promised a certain amount of money, and it was large enough, he would when he had nearly earned his money not hesitate to strike down the man who stepped in and virtually snatched the money from his hand.

The interview between Nick and Mr. Fielding furnishes us with a large quantity of data, which, properly used, ought to help us along a good distance. This introduces us to Professor Drummond, rich, an intimate friend of the Hawleys, formerly a professor in a medical college, old, and, therefore, cranky. Drummond comes in as a suspect, one that will bear watching. He is old,

has known Hawley a long time, and it is probable that he has treasured up some unintentional slight and brooded over it in his hermit life, until he has developed it into an insult. Now, the question arises, if he hates Hawley, may he not have drugged the boy, and, by getting him alive into his power, intended to wreak his vengeance on the father thus. But the fact that the body was embalmed knocks this theory out. Even if the boy had been drugged with this motive, the corpse would be of no use to the man. More data is necessary to find the motive. Then comes the interview with Drummond. There, the queer talk, especially about the elixer of life, not only settles the motive permanently under insanity, but show the reason for the elaborate plans, etc., and also give the finishing stroke to the drug theory.

Yours truly,

Washington, D. C.

HENRY HASTINGS.

Editor Nick Carter Weekly—

Dear Sir: I have read your magazines for about a year, and I think they are very good.

I have just read "Nick Carter Strikes Oil," and I think it is a fine story.

I thought Claymore was the would-be murderer, for when the people came to the clergyman, and said he was a swindler, I knew he would think there was something wrong, and therefore expose Claymore.

When I had read a ways I didn't think Claymore was the murderer, but that he would hire some one else to do his dirty job.

I think the way Nick caught the men very scientific. Best wishes to Nick, Chick, Patsy and Ida Jones.

I remain yours truly,
Simcoe, Ontario.

KEN D. CHRISTIE.

Good work, Ken. You showed you had some of the genuine detective instinct. The case was a puzzler, wasn't it?

Editor Nick Carter Weekly—

Dear Sir: I have been a very interested reader of your publication, Nick Carter Weekly, for quite a long

time, and have found the stories unequaled anywhere. I enjoy thinking ahead of a story. In "Nick Carter Strikes Oil," I was sure that Hank Low was not guilty because there were fourteen pages more to read, and they had to contain something. They could not tell about Hank Low, as he did not have sense enough to lead Nick and Patsy a chase. Therefore, I surmised that Low was innocent. I wish you success in your publications, and may NICK CARTER WEEKLY never stop.

Yours sincerely,

Terre Haute, Ind.

BENJAMIN GROSVENOR.

Your system was a very ingenious one, but it would not work in all cases. The other pages might have related to another crime or the attempts to capture Low. However, your letter is a good one, and we would like to hear from you again.

Editor Nick Carter Weekly—

Dear Sir: I am still a constant reader of NICK CARTER WEEKLY and find I become more interested in Nick Carter every time I read of his fame. Of course, there are a few other good weeklies, but none better and few so good.

I have just finished "Nick Carter Strikes Oil; or, Uearthing more than a Murderer," and felt very sorry for the minister.

I am very glad Jack Thomson got his deserts in prison and think Claymore and Hamilton's fate was none too hard for them considering how they tried to throw that guilt upon poor Hank Low.

I send another joke to you, hoping it will win a prize of some kind. I hope Nick will have good luck forever.

I remain,

Asheville, N. C.

FRED W. ROCKHOLD.

Thanks for your good wishes, Fred. Your letter is a very interesting and intelligent one. You are all right as an amateur detective.

A Little Humor.

(By Fred Rockhold, N. C.)

"Ole Bill Ryan" had never been to town before. He was stalking up Main street, in that gawky style peculiar to all hayseeds.

Suddenly the street sprinkler dashed by, sprinkling as it went.

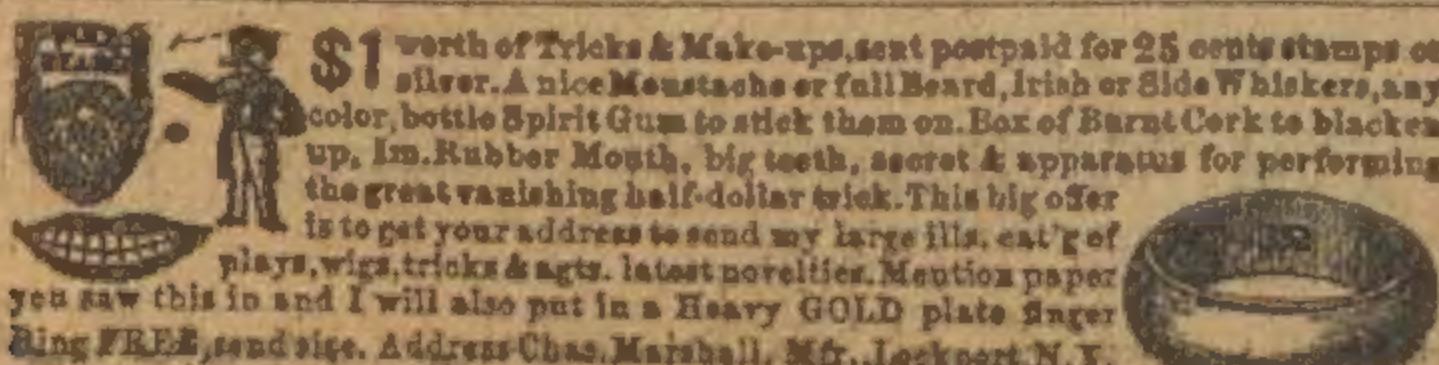
"Gol durned, they hev ter haul watter eroun in ther gol-derned cyarts. Wal, durned ef et ain't leaking out," was Bill's comment, as he saw the water playing out of the trap. So he set off on a brisk run to tell the driver.

On they raced until the driver stopped to take in more water at Chestnut street, nearly a mile from where Bill first saw it. Up came Bill panting and breathless.

"Mister, yer wagin es er-leakin'."

"Well, I guess I knows it," said the driver.

"Wal, gol dern yer, who said yer didn't," said Bill.



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50 Prizes • 50 Prizes

There is a good chance for every boy in our new

Funny Story Contest

YOU ALL KNOW what rattling funny stories we printed in the recent contests. We are following them with another of the same kind. You have just as good a chance in this contest as any other boy in America, whether you entered the other contest or not. We want

More Funny Stories

Think of the funniest story of which you have ever heard, or the best joke. Write it out and send it to us—then look out for funny stories. We are publishing in this contest some of the best side-splitters that ever came out of the joke factory. Remember the prizes we are offering. In this contest there are

Fifty New Prizes

FIVE FIRST PRIZES

The five boys who send in the five funniest stories will each receive TEN BOOKS from the list given in No. 280. The list includes some of the best detective stories, tales of adventure, and most interesting boys' stories ever written.

TEN SECOND PRIZES

The ten boys who send in the next funniest stories will each receive any FOUR BOOKS they may select in the list in No. 280.

FIFTEEN THIRD PRIZES

The fifteen boys who send us the next funniest stories will each receive any THREE BOOKS they may select in the list in No. 280. The twenty boys who send in next funniest stories will receive any TWO BOOKS they may select in the list in No. 280.

HERE ARE THE DIRECTIONS

This contest will close September 1st. Remember, whether your story wins a prize or not, it stands a good chance of being published, together with your name.

To become a contestant for these prizes you must cut out the Prize Contest Coupon printed herewith, fill it out properly, and mail it to NICK CARTER WEEKLY, care of Street & Smith, 238 William St., New York City, together with your story. No story will be considered that does not have this coupon accompanying it.

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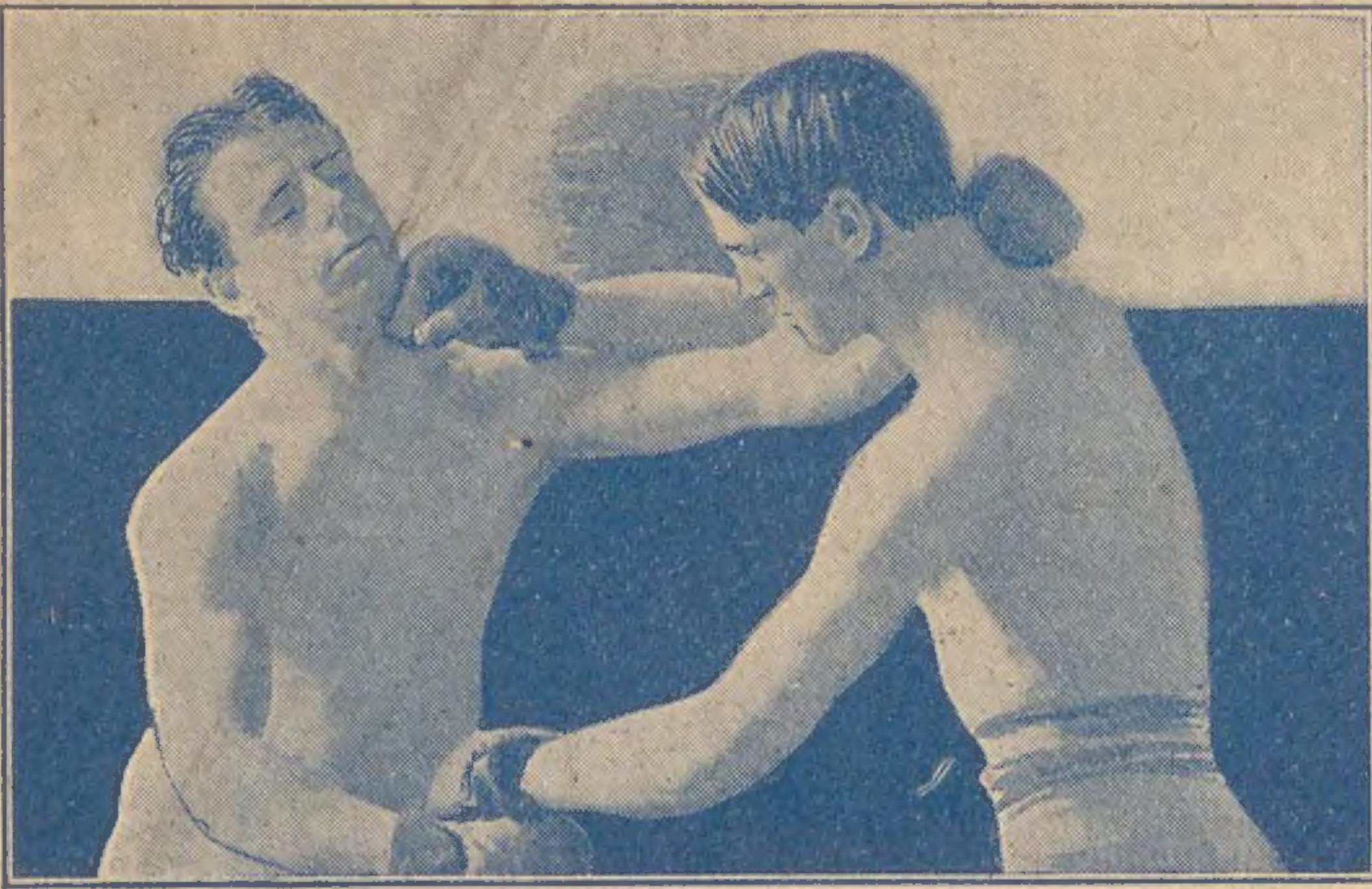
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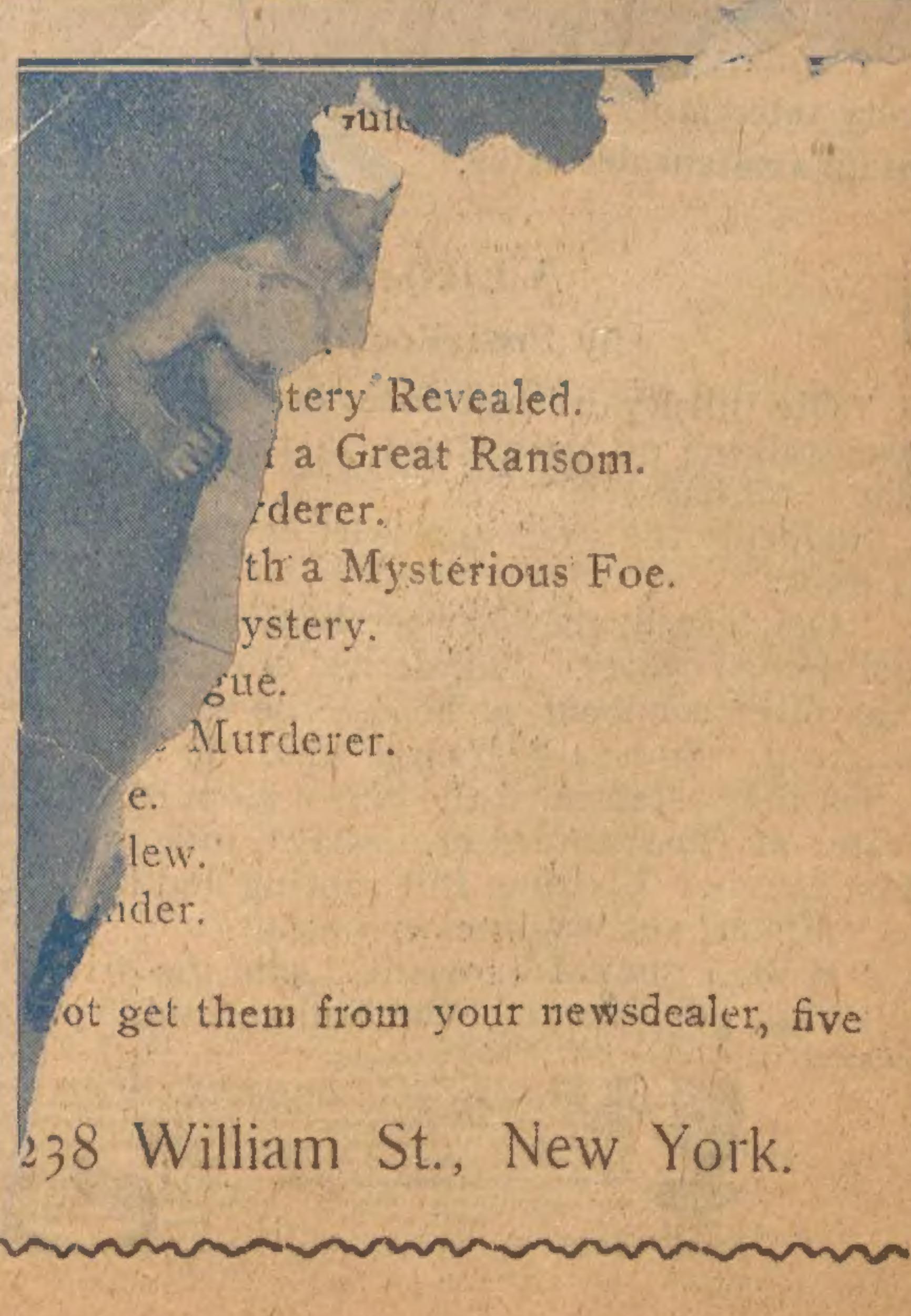
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